

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL AS “EXPLAINED” BY THE PROPHET HOSEA! LUKE 12 :13 - 21 AND HOSEA 2.

Introduction:

A disciple of Jesus Christ receives wealth from God that is also expressed in the way we relate to what we own and to the resources of creation.

This parable tells how the life ends of someone who tries to build his own bastion of happiness. The very foundations of such a life cracks when the judgment of God comes upon it.

The meaning of the parable.

Why was this man foolish? Because he was wealthy? No, his foolishness lies in his perception that material things can buy everything one needs to be happy and that it even provides the comfortable knowledge that everything eternal is fine too. His is the foolishness of adding up everything one has /owns and then come to the conclusion that you are fine and secure.

Not only my material belongings, but also my culture, my lifestyle and even my church may add up to an unholy conclusion that I am ok and lacks nothing! This leads to false optimism where a person says to himself: “You have done well, you are fine and you are saved.”

This approach to life leads to chasing after more than we need, neglecting the real and true wealth in God. It leads to a philosophy that says: If I own more, if I have more - a bigger barn, a better car, another house, a more luxurious holiday, a more gifted church-life - when I have more, I will be fine; if I own more, I will be fine.

It is into this ungodly concept that a self-made life is a “saved life” that God speaks with this parable. It is this life that is finally judged by the question: Was this person rich with God? This question only, will reveal the success of one’s life.

When we are rich with God, a new relationship also exists between what we own and ourselves. The needs of God’s world and of the people living in this world play a role in how we see what to do with the harvest of blessings we receive.

Waste on the one hand and greed on the other indicates that our relationship with God lacks a true understanding of the real wealth God intends for us.

There are 2 major mistakes made.

Firstly we separate God from the material world. We spiritualise our relationship with God to the extend that we believe that we may deal with the fruit of the earth in any way we see fit.

We think that our relationship with our possessions has nothing to do with our relationship with God. It seems to be our personal business in a way that excludes God. This is not what Jesus taught or what the Bible teaches.

Secondly we do not see God as sustainer. We will defend God as Creator against anyone denying it for whatever reason. But we do not with the same passion defend God’s role as Sustainer and therefore do not see the sustenance of the earth and its resources as part of our Christian calling.

Hosea chapter 2 is a classic example of how our relationship with the earth / environment is a tool of measurement of our relationship with God!

Hosea 2, teaches that our relationship with a transcendent God - a creator that is not part of creation, but transcends creation, the Creator and Sustainer of creation, will ensure a new responsible approach to nature and to life in general.

If we accept Hosea's perspective that our enjoyment of the fruit of creation is the enjoyment of God's blessings and when we serve the Creator according to the new covenant that Hosea says will come about when the Messiah comes, faith in a transcendent God will provide the ultimate solution to amongst others the ecological issues that challenge our planet.

In Hosea 2 the author uses the prophet's marriage to Gomer, his unfaithful wife, as a parable of the relationship (covenant) between God and Israel. Israel's adultery, not being faithful to God, but seeking the blessings of the nature gods, the Baals, that were seen as the divine part of the earth and all that is alive - that *this adultery led to God's curse on them and thus on their land and its fruitfulness.*

Israel's existence was constantly threatened by the unfaithfulness of God's people, for the land is the location of both God's blessings and the place where their obedience is tested.

The blessings of fertility were gifts that Israel should receive with gratitude and joy towards the Creator who only was able to give these blessings. Disobedience and whoring with the Baal-gods threatened these gifts, because they were not seen to be received from the Creator anymore and it made Israel an unfaithful wife of God.

God's intervention on behalf of his people is based on his primary relationship with his people. He is primarily the only God they should serve and they should not whore after any other gods. God's blessings are part of his loving care of his faithful people and when judgment threatened as a result of their unfaithfulness, creation is endangered too, as it is not only the place where blessings are received, but also where God's judgement takes place. Where an ungodly relationship with material world exists, this very environment becomes the place where God's judgment takes place and in this way man's sinful nature, greed and/or abuse becomes a threat to his environment.

The New Covenant that God would bring about with his people through the work of the Messiah, according to Hosea, includes a new creation, where there would be harmony between creation and human existence. Just as the blessings of the earth would be taken away from them when God comes to judge his people, he also in the new covenant will add to their blessings ***the fruit of the earth and the enjoyment of what it holds.*** Receiving grain, wine and oil will show that the relationship between God and his people has been restored. The redemptive work of God would include the provision of a new sustained earth, where man responsibly enjoys the fruit of his environment.

The only possible solution for Israel, is to be found in the new covenant that God proposes. This new relationship also includes a new relationship with the created order - that is, it involves a covenant between Israel and creation. In this new covenant with creation, neither the human order nor the crops will be threatened. Israel will rest in safety. The new covenant between God and his people, results in a new covenant with the environment that is safe for both the people of God and the environment that God created and sustains.

Christians should therefore strive towards a "simple and peaceful" lifestyle and thereby become part of something greater than homeostasis (a balance between our needs and the needs of the environment).

Christians expect a new covenant, a new heaven and a new earth brought about by the Messiah. Christians expect God's ultimate intervention from outside of the created universe. This hope should motivate us to seek a solution for our ecological disasters, based on expecting and realising God's reign and not a restoration that comes from creation itself.

Our environmental problems relates to our estrangement from the Creator:
Evangelism is therefore the beginning of taking up our environmental responsibility, because only when people's relationship with the Creator is restored, are they empowered to address the issues of

his creation. Based on God's introduction of a new covenant with the earth for those whose relationship with him has been restored, we can envision and act on a view of a new, healthy world.

The new covenant of which Hosea spoke was initiated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. This new relationship with God leads to a simple lifestyle that ***excludes the greed and selfishness that exploits the earth***. The true Christian lifestyle then, in the new covenant, is the true answer to our environmental crises and not the gods of the earth, or any other gods.

In conclusion:

A disciple of Jesus Christ receives wealth from God that is amongst other things expressed in the way we relate to what we own and the way we are God's servants in sustaining the resources of creation.

God is after all revealed in the Scriptures as

Creator

Sustainer

and Saviour of his people, his kingdom and his creation.

This is why Paul says in Romans 8:21 - 23 that creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

This is the Word of God.

Amen

Any comments with regard to this sermon outline may be mailed to andries@centurionwest.co.za